

## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers November 3, 2003

### At least 7 killed in weekend crashes on Michigan roads

(AP) — An Indiana man who died when the vehicle he was riding in collided with another vehicle in Cass County was among at least seven people killed in weekend traffic crashes on Michigan roads, authorities said Monday.

Peter M. Strachan, 43, was killed in the crash about 6:30 p.m. Sunday in Milton Township. Sheriff's officials said he was wearing a seat belt.

In other weekend crashes, state and local police said:

\_A Dayton, Ohio man whose name was not released died when his vehicle flipped over and was hit by another vehicle about 2 p.m. Sunday in Washtenaw County's York Township.

\_A driver whose name wasn't released died in a crash in Lapeer County's Lapeer Township about 8 a.m. Sunday. The driver wasn't wearing a seat belt.

\_A 29-year-old driver from Pinckney whose name wasn't released died in a rollover accident in Washtenaw County's Lyndon Township on Saturday. He wasn't wearing a seat belt.

\_Deborah Sue Collier, 21, of Kingsford, died after the vehicle she was driving collided head-on with another vehicle in Dickinson County's Breitung Township. She was not wearing a seat belt.

\_A 25-year-old man whose name wasn't released died after a crash about 5 a.m. Saturday on Belle Isle in Detroit. It wasn't known whether he was wearing a seat belt.

\_Driver Jehkota D. Harris, 25, of Ypsilanti, died after a crash about 2:30 a.m. Saturday in Wayne County's Van Buren Township. Harris wasn't wearing a seat belt.

### Weight Reduction in Vehicles Increased Risk of Fatal Crash Involvement

Weight reductions in passenger cars, lighter vans, pickup trucks, and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) increased the risk of fatal crash involvement, a study by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has concluded. The study of 1991-99 models also found that large four-door passenger cars and minivans had the lowest fatality rates of all vehicle types. **For the NHTSA press release, visit**

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2003&filename=pr45-03.html>.

[Top](#)

### Compliance with a Ban Restricting the Use of Handheld Cell Phones by Drivers in New York Erodes

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) reports that compliance with a ban restricting the use of handheld cell phones by drivers in New York is eroding. According to the Institute, one year after the state became the first to enact a law that bans the use of handheld cell phones while driving, use rates have returned to the same level as before the law. Although NY remains the only state to ban drivers from talking on their handheld cell phones while driving, 17 states have passed some sort of legislation regarding cell phone use according to Matt Sundeen of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). For an update on state legislative activity regarding distracted driving and other traffic safety issues **visit the NCSL site at** <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/esnr/transp2.htm>.

[Top](#)

### British Businesses Give Massive Vote of Confidence to Company Cars

British businesses have given a massive vote of confidence to the company car in a new survey - but their fleet departments are crying out for more help to run vehicles. A total of 85% of fleets, according to the survey said they felt the business car has a future, while 74% of fleets say their vehicles are

provided for essential business use. Just over half of respondents thought that company cars would retain their importance in the employee recruitment and retention process. But the GEE Guide to Company Cars 2003/04 revealed that fleet decision-makers are struggling to cope with the pressure brought on by the increasing importance of company cars. A total of 63% of fleet managers put the difficult balancing act of meeting the needs of the company and drivers at the top of their problem list, compared to 49% last year and 48% in 2001. Other problems include understanding tax and other legislative changes, dealing with accident claims and procedures and managing parking fines, speeding fines and other offences committed by their drivers. Tax changes cause problems for 55% of fleets and finding time to manage the fleet causes problems for 39%. Although the survey of 158 companies revealed an increase in fleets affected by accidents, less than one-third of companies (30%) have conducted risk assessments on the hazards facing company car drivers, a figure that has remained static since last year.

[Top](#)

### New IRS Rule to Help Keep Track of Mileage Expenses

Keeping track of mileage expenses will be a lot easier next year when a new Internal Revenue Service rule takes effect. The rule, which the IRS released last week with the optional 2004 standard mileage rates, will allow taxpayers who use no more than four vehicles at the same time for business purposes to use the standard mileage rates to calculate their tax deductions. The new mileage rate for 2004 is 37.5 cents a mile, up from 36 cents in 2003. According to the IRS, the increase is attributed to a recent rise in gasoline prices. The following situations are exceptions to the new rule, and are not allowed to use the standard mileage rate:

- Vehicles that have been claimed as deductions under Section 179
- Vehicles that have been depreciated under any method using the Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MARCS)
- Vehicles for hire

[Top](#)

### New Wireless Technology to Alert Drivers of Mechanical Problems

The Reynolds & Reynolds Co., a Dayton-based automotive supplier, is offering a new aftermarket product called Networkcar that uses wireless technology to alert subscribers by e-mail of mechanical problems, recall notices, service reminders and other information. It's available in 10 states for \$1,000 or more, depending in part on the length of the service contract. A nationwide rollout is planned next year. **For more information, visit the Networkcar website at [www.networkcar.com](http://www.networkcar.com).**

[Top](#)

### FDOT Published Study Results on Factors That Affect Older Drivers

The Florida Department of Transportation's Research Center has published the results of a study that examined the perceptual, cognitive, and neurological factors that affect older drivers. The report suggests several possible remedies for driving impairments as a function of age. **To view the report, visit [http://www.dot.state.fl.us/research-center/Completed\\_Proj/Summary TE/FDOT BC096 07 rpt.pdf](http://www.dot.state.fl.us/research-center/Completed_Proj/Summary_TE/FDOT_BC096_07_rpt.pdf).**

[Top op](#)

### GM Announced Results of Daytime Running Lamps Study

General Motors (GM) announced results of a study that shows GM customers have avoided well over 37,000 collisions since daytime running lamps (DRLs) became standard equipment in 1995. Using information from police and collision reports and traffic registration data from 17 states, the study shows estimated reductions in daytime multiple vehicle crashes ranging from 2.3 percent to nearly 12.5 percent, depending on the driving condition, type of DRL used and type of collision. The study analyzed conditions including daylight or dawn/dusk, daylight with good/poor visibility, daylight on highway/local streets, as well as multiple vehicle, pedestrian, child pedestrian, head-on and motorcycle crashes. "These new findings provide additional support for this simple and inexpensive countermeasure," said Brian O'Neill, president, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "We would like



to see every manufacturer make daytime running lights standard equipment." In December 2001, GM filed a petition with NHTSA asking it to adopt rulemaking that would require all automakers to install DRLs on new vehicles sold in the U.S. The petition covered passenger vehicles, multipurpose passenger vehicles, trucks and buses. Daytime running lamps already are mandatory in Canada, and in several European countries. To view the GM news release, visit [http://www.gm.com/cgi-bin/pr\\_display.pl?6068](http://www.gm.com/cgi-bin/pr_display.pl?6068).

[Top](#) [op](#)